



GCSE

SPANISH

8698/SF Speaking
Report on the Examination

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General comments

Students generally seemed better prepared for the examination this year and this could be seen in slightly improved performances, particularly in the Photo card and General conversation. Teachers clearly were able to practise for the examination more effectively than last year because of the reduced amount of disruption. With the Photo card especially, exam technique has been worked on by many teachers and this resulted in higher marks generally.

In the General conversation, there was a wide range of types of performance and of conduct by the teacher. On the whole, teachers adapted to the ability of the student doing the test and to the relative nervousness of their students. It was encouraging to see teachers sympathetically coaxing their more nervous students through the General conversation in order that they performed to the best of their ability.

As always, the conduct of the test can have a bearing on the marks awarded to students. The conduct was generally good. However, there were many instances of students losing marks unnecessarily, especially in the Role play and General conversation, but also in the Photo card. In the Role play, this was because teachers did not adhere to the script and reworded or shortened the printed question in their role. In these instances, the student's response for that task received no marks. In the Photo card, teachers are allowed to paraphrase the question, but sometimes the alternative version used was not a paraphrase or it was a shortened form of the question. Again, when this happened, the student's response scored no marks. The issue in the General conversation was with timing and this sometimes led to a loss of marks.

Examiners had to use a Speaking Scoresheet in order to arrive at fair and consistent marks for all students. A copy of this can be found at the end of the mark scheme.

Teacher-examiner Tester Performance records (TTPRs)

The information provided on the TTPR is intended to provide teacher-examiners with feedback on the conduct of the speaking tests to inform the conduct of future tests. It is not possible to provide more detailed feedback than the information on the TTPR form. The feedback is provided on the basis of need only and will not be necessary for every school/college.

A breakdown of marks for each section of the speaking test for each student in your centre is available free of charge in ERA (Enhanced Results Analysis). ERA is accessed via Centre Services.

Role plays

Teachers should keep to the script of the Role play because failure to do so will result in a student's response to a particular task being discounted. It is not acceptable to repeat part of a prompt. For example, in Role play 2, the unexpected question was *¿A qué hora te vas a la cama?* If a student did not understand the question, it was acceptable for the teacher to repeat the full question. However, it was not acceptable for the teacher simply to repeat the key question words *¿A qué hora?* Had this type of change to the prompt been accepted, it would have provided an unfair advantage to those students because it made the task easier. So, as always, teachers are reminded that they must keep to their script.

If students prepared sufficiently well in the 12-minute preparation period, they should have had notes which they could read out once they moved on to the next task. Sometimes it seemed that they were not doing that or that they had not made notes. It still appears that many students are reluctant to read from their notes or that they do not write out exactly what they are going to say for the four prepared tasks. As part of exam technique training, they should be encouraged to do this.

At this tier, there is no need to use any tense other than present in the Role play. Some tasks will still be fulfilled if a past or future reference is made, but it should be discouraged because errors resulting in a loss of marks are often made when other tenses are attempted needlessly.

The published mark scheme has more detail as to the kind of responses that were worthy of two, one or zero marks per task.

The mark for Knowledge and use of language usually corresponded with the mark for Communication. For example, 8 for Communication would usually result in a mark of 4 for Knowledge and use of language.

Teachers are encouraged not to use English during the course of the test. The mark scheme says: 'If, in any part of the test, the teacher either asks a question or gives a prompt in English, you must ignore the student's reply'. In the Role play, it is acceptable for the teacher to prompt the question task by saying to the student: *¿Tienes una pregunta para mí?* or something similar in Spanish. However, if the teacher asks in English 'Have you got a question?', whatever the student says will score zero, as clearly stated in the mark scheme. This happened occasionally again this year, but fortunately not as often as last year.

The transactional Role plays were less well done by many students, in particular Role play 1, set in a shop, and Role play 3, set in a restaurant. It is not uncommon for students to struggle with this type of Role play, maybe because it is an unfamiliar setting for them.

In the question-asking task, the student must ask a question. It cannot be in the form of an imperative, such as *Describe ...* or *Háblame de ...*

Below are some detailed comments on each of the Role plays:

Role play 1

Task a

Many students just mentioned a colour, rather than saying that they wanted a T-shirt of a particular colour.

Task b

Talla was not a well-known vocabulary item.

Task c

This was generally done quite well, although sometimes *Inglaterra* was used.

Task d

Well done by the majority.

Task e

Precio was often not understood and very few were able to ask *¿Cuánto es?*

Role play 2

Task a

This was done very well.

Task b

Any appropriate positive aspect was accepted. The most popular one was *Es divertido*.

Task c

¿A que hora? was a question that caused considerable problems.

Task d

This was done well.

Task e

This question task was done well on the whole.

Role play 3

Task a

This was done reasonably well, although many just gave a number.

Task b

This was not done well, usually because students appeared not to understand *dónde*.

Task c

This was done quite well, although some confused *beber* with *vivir*, which resulted in an inappropriate response.

Task d

This was not done well at all. Many just said *¿Plato recomendado?* which scored no marks because it was just a repeat of the prompt with nothing added.

Task e

This was done quite well, although the pronunciation of *vegetariana* caused problems when it was used in the response.

Role play 4

Task a

This was done reasonably well, although many gave an opinion rather than a description.

Task b

This was done well, as were most opinion-giving tasks.

Task c

This was often misunderstood. Students often seemed not to know the meaning of *cómo* and occasionally took it to mean lunch time.

Task d

¿Cuánto tiempo? was rarely understood.

Task e

This was done well.

Role play 5

Task a

This was done well, although some misunderstood *país* and gave a holiday activity.

Task b

This was well done.

Task c

Done well by most students, with the most common response being *Es aburrido*.

Task d

This was one of the most well done unprepared tasks.

Task e

Often students gained just one mark here because they left out any reference to Uruguay.

Role play 6

Task a

This was done well.

Task b

¿Cuándo? was another question word that caused considerable problems.

Task c

This was not done well at all, probably because it was an unprepared task.

Task d

This was done well.

Task e

For a question-asking task, which students in general find difficult, this was done quite well.

Role play 7

Task a

This was done very well.

Task b

This caused more problems than expected, although many got two marks for saying *Es simpático/a* or *Es divertido/a*.

Task c

Es/son aburrido(s)/difícil(es) were the more common successful answers.

Task d

This was done reasonably well if students understood the question.

Task e

This was done well. *¿Te gusta(n) (los) exámenes?* was the most common question by far.

Role play 8

Task a

This was done very well.

Task b

As in other Role plays which contained a task which included the word *aspecto*, this was done well. This was encouraging to see because last year many seemed to not understand the word, even though it is a near-cognate.

Task c

Many did not score a mark because they did not understand or pick up on the word *dónde*.

Task d

¿Cuántas? seemed not to be understood by many.

Task e

This was done very well with the most common question being *¿Te gusta Netflix?*

Role play 9

Task a

Students did this well.

Task b

The question was often not understood. Many students got two marks because any number was allowed, no matter how unlikely.

Task c

Very well done.

Task d

As in task b in Role play 6, this was done badly because many students did not understand *cuándo*.

Task e

This was not done well at all.

Photo cards

Many teachers had prepared their students very well for this part of the exam. They had clearly read Appendix 4 of the mark scheme, which deals with the marking of the Photo card, and passed this information on successfully to their students. Any teachers who are not fully aware of how the Photo card is marked are strongly recommended to read Appendix 4 of the mark scheme and to look at the examples that are given for the award of different marks.

Teachers are allowed to paraphrase the questions in this part of the exam, but the same meaning must be maintained, or the student's answer is not credited. For example, the second question on Photo card A was *¿Cuál es tu opinión sobre hacer deportes con amigos?* If a teacher paraphrased by asking *¿Qué piensas de hacer deportes con amigos?*, this was fine because exactly the same meaning was maintained. However, *¿Te gusta hacer deportes con amigos?* was not allowed because it is not a paraphrase – it can be answered by *Sí* or *No*, which the aforementioned two questions cannot. In addition, extra words such as *en el pasado* or *actividades* cannot be added to the printed questions, nor can words or phrases be repeated within the question, for example in the third question on Photo card H: *¿Qué hiciste la semana pasada para relajarte ... la semana pasada?*

Some questions on the Photo cards are followed by *¿Por qué?* For those that are not, if the teacher follows up by asking *¿Por qué?*, any subsequent reason given is not accepted.

Questions differentiated well, with a wide range in the quality of answers, but there were some that were done noticeably less well than others. These were the ones which students found most challenging:

Photo card C

¿Qué te gustaría cambiar en tu pueblo? ... ¿Por qué?

This was a prepared question, but students often could not answer it.

En tu casa, ¿cuál es tu habitación favorita? ... ¿Por qué?

Habitación was not at all well known.

Photo card D

¿Qué compras con tu dinero?

This was an unprepared question and that may be the reason why so many students could not provide an answer.

Photo card E

¿Qué hiciste en el colegio la semana pasada?

Most students seemed to understand the question, but many responses lacked clarity because the present tense was used.

Photo card F

En tu opinión, ¿cuál es el sitio perfecto para casarse? Por qué?

The word *sitio* was often not known by students, leading to a wrong answer.

Photo card G

¿Qué hiciste en tu última clase de inglés?

Students found this very difficult.

Photo card I

¿Te gusta comprar por Internet? ... ¿Por qué (no)?

This was frequently met with silence or with an answer that was not related to the question. Other uses for the Internet rather than buying things were mentioned.

General conversation

As mentioned previously, there was a very wide range of performance in the General conversation. However, the overall impression is that students were better prepared this year than last year, as was to be expected.

Conduct of the General conversation also differed greatly. Many students had learnt, or tried to learn, answers to a list of questions. For higher attaining students at the tier, this worked well, provided the teacher interspersed these with follow-up questions which allowed for greater spontaneity. Often, however, very similar questions were asked of all students and the more difficult ones were often not answered by students. This took up valuable time in the tests and led to disjointed conversations. Where teachers' questions were sympathetic to the ability of students, things worked much better and they got higher marks as a result.

As a general rule, students tended to do less well in the General conversation than they had done in the Role play and Photo card. This was the opposite of what happened in 2019. Why this was the case can only be a matter for supposition. However, it may be that during time away from school, it was more straightforward for students to be given work which practised how to tackle the Role play and Photo card than it was to practise the General conversation.

The required length of the General conversation is between three and five minutes. Each theme must last for a minimum of one and a half minutes and, if one or both are under that time, there is a penalty of two marks for Communication. Timing of the first theme begins when the teacher starts to ask the first question relating to that theme. The timing of that theme ends, and the second one begins, when the teacher asks the first question relating to the second theme. In other words, the changeover time between themes is added on to the first theme. Timing of the second theme ends when the teacher says 'End of test'.

The other time that a penalty of one mark for Communication is applied is if the student does not ask an understandable question of the teacher. It is advisable to try and get the student to ask a question during the first theme. In this way, if the question makes no coherent sense, the teacher can prompt another question later in the conversation. If the question is asked at the end of the conversation, time may be up and it is therefore too late. In this part of the exam, a student can be

credited with asking the question by saying *¿Y tú?* if it is asked appropriately. For example, when asked, *¿Adónde vas de vacaciones?*, the reply is *Voy a Francia. ¿Y tú?* However, if the teacher prompts a question by asking *¿Tienes una pregunta para mí?*, merely to say *¿Y tú?* would not count as an appropriate question.

Advice to teachers

General

- Do a short test recording before the first student's test to check recording levels and clarity.
- Position the microphone or digital recorder so that it picks up both voices clearly.
- Make sure that your own and the students' mobile phones are switched off (not just on silent) before the recording begins. Students should not have access to their mobile during the preparation time or during the exam, in accordance with examination regulations.
- Make sure that you read the *Instructions for the conduct of examinations* document. It is essential that you follow the instructions in that document.
- In the Instructions document, you are told how to introduce each student in English. This is what you should say at the start of the recording for every student:
GCSE Spanish examination, June (*year of exam*). Centre number ____, candidate number ____, candidate name ____. Role play number ____, Photo card letter ____, General conversation theme chosen by candidate Theme (1, 2 or 3).
- Everything said by the teacher must be clearly audible. Instances of whispering will be referred to AQA, as will instances where it sounds as though something is being written down.
- Use Spanish throughout the exam once you have introduced the student and his/her Role play and Photo card combinations and the nominated theme for the General conversation in English.
- Respond positively to what students say, even if it is not very good. It will encourage them for the rest of the test.
- Practise pronunciation as often as possible. It can be a good use of the Foreign Language Assistant's time, if you have one.

Role play

- Keep to your script as laid out in the Teacher's Role. Not to do so will mean that the student's response will receive a mark of 0 for Communication in that task.
- If you see that a student is starting to give the wrong answer to your question, stop him/her and repeat the question. Once the student completes an incorrect answer, a mark of 0 for Communication is given for that task, even if you repeat the question and a correct answer is given subsequently.
- If a student asks for repetition of your question or if there is no answer, you may repeat the question.
- If there is a two-part question in a task, ask the first question, wait for an answer, and then ask the second question. Failure to do so often leads to the student having to ask for repetition.

Photo card

- You may paraphrase a question, provided the same meaning is maintained. However, be careful that that is the case or the student's reply will not be credited.
- Ask all five questions in the Teacher's Booklet, but do not ask any follow-up questions.

- Keep an eye on the timing. If a student's replies are very long and it looks as though you may not be able to ask the final question in the two-minute maximum time, you may be better to interrupt an answer and ask the next one.

General conversation

- Encourage students to vary their language structures and vocabulary as much as possible. Opinions are the most obvious area to focus on – not everything has to be described as *interesante* or *aburrido* and there are other ways to say *me gusta*. In order to introduce some variety of language, ensure that students have a bank of adjectives such as *divertido*, *impresionante*, *maravilloso*, *estupendo*, *antipático*; and verbs such as *me encanta*, *me interesa*, *lo encuentro ...*, *odio*, *me molesta*.
- Train students to give and justify opinions without necessarily being asked to do so. This can form the basis of different starter activities.
- Be sensitive to the ability of the students – someone who struggles to describe his/her town is not going to be successful discussing more challenging aspects of the topic, for example the impact of global warming.
- Try to ask students questions that reflect their interests. Don't ask all students identical questions.
- In order to achieve a greater sense of spontaneity in the conversation, follow up a student's response by asking about what they have just told you.
- Announce the change of theme in Spanish: *Ahora vamos a pasar al tema número uno*, etc.
- Keep a close eye on the time. If one of the themes lasts for less than 1'30", there is a deduction of two marks for Communication.
- The maximum length of the General conversation is five minutes. Everything after that will not be marked.
- Remember to prompt the student to ask you a question if they don't do it without being asked. It is better to get them to ask you the question in their nominated theme so that you don't forget to do it later on.
- If the first question the student asks you makes no sense, get them to ask you another one.

Advice to students

- Use the 12 minutes preparation time wisely. You can write down exactly what you are going to say in the Role play tasks and in response to the three questions on the Photo card.
- For the Photo card questions, try to prepare answers of at least three sentences, using a verb in each one.
- Listen carefully to the questions that your teacher asks you for the unprepared questions in the Role play and Photo card and to all questions in the General conversation.
- Make sure you know common question words such as *¿cuándo?*, *¿cuántos?*, *¿dónde?*, *¿quién?*, *¿cómo?* and *¿qué?*
- You can ask for repetition of a question in any part of the test, but make sure it is in Spanish. You can say *Repíte, por favor* or *¿Cómo?*, for example.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.